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THE SECOND COMING AND THE KINGDOM

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In canceling his subscription to the BIBLICAL WORLD, a gentleman gives as his reason that he does "not care to pay for a publication which admits to its pages palpable and biting injustices, as may be seen in every issue of the BIBLICAL WORLD, against a large and to be honored following of perfectly sincere, devout, and highly intelligent men and women of the church who are pleased to look with glad hope to the second coming of their, and our, Savior, Jesus Christ." He closes his thoroughly good-tempered discussion with this question, "Why may not the Premillennialists be let alone to enjoy 'that blessed hope' which gives to their longing souls so much comfort and joy while they wait for their Lord, even though He delay his coming?" The question is appropriate, and our reply is immediate. We are not engaged in a religious controversy, but are endeavoring to save the faith of thousands of men and women in Christianity. We do not mean to let anything be published in these pages which is contrary to the spirit of the Master. We do believe, however, that discussion of premillenarianism is necessary, for in our opinion the present propaganda threatens the influence of the church among men and women who are to be counted upon for social reconstruction.

There are five passages in the Synoptic Gospels, duplicated to some extent, it is true, which are commonly regarded as bearing directly upon Jesus' doctrine of the Parousia. These will be considered in turn and in the order in which they are found. After this, we will inquire concerning the doctrine of the Second Coming, as it appears in the Fourth Gospel. Before beginning our investigation, however, it will be well to bear in mind the meaning of the Greek word—*Parousia*. Literally translated, it means "presence" as opposed to absence. Derivatively, it came to denote that which ushered in the presence—*namely the arrival, or coming*.

Till the Son of Man Be Come

Early in his career, Jesus sent forth the Twelve to assist in proclaiming the nearness of the Kingdom of God. In the midst of his advice as to their jour-

ney, their equipment, and their method of procedure, he declared: "Verily I say unto you, ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of Man be come" (Matt. 10:23). Some have contended that Jesus meant simply that he would rejoin the apostles with a view to assisting them. Others make the "coming" through the Holy Spirit to be the "coming" referred to. Others, again, find a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in A.D. 70, while many interpret the words as signifying the general triumph of the Messiah's cause, and some find that Jesus was simply mistaken. This assurance, however, we think, was necessary in view of the persecution which he had just foretold as the portion of the Twelve. "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick." Jesus emphasized that the Son of Man would come in spite of all indications to the contrary. Those, indeed, who were

then proclaiming the nearness of the Kingdom would not have finished their circuit of Israel before that Kingdom, which they announced as coming, would actually be at hand in the person of the Son of Man; i.e., the Messiah, the Inaugurator of the Kingdom promised in Dan. 7:13-14. The mental contrast is between "coming" and "come."

Coming in His Kingdom

The second explicit declaration in regard to the Parousia is as follows: "For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. *Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom*" (Matt. 16:27-28). In Luke 9:26-27, we read: "For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels. But I tell you of a truth, *there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God*" (cf. Mark 8:38; 9:1). A careful perusal of these passages—both refer to the same occasion and give substantially the same utterance of Jesus—reveals the emphatic assertion of the certainty of the Second Coming, its awards, and its proximity. But what is "the coming"?

The usual method is to interpret the first verse of each passage (and some even wrest the second verse to this sense) of the final judgment of mankind. The second verse, however, surrounds this interpretation with difficulty. Hence diverse explanations are offered. Because of the close relationship of the

time of these sayings and the incident of the Transfiguration, a few days later, some find the fulfilment of the prophecy in that event. The Transfiguration was "the coming of the Son of Man." Jesus, however, would hardly solemnly assure his hearers that they would live to witness an event only a week distant. Nor would he have announced publicly a fulfilment of his prophecy which was witnessed in private, and by three persons alone, who were commanded to keep the vision secret until after the Resurrection. Others find the fulfilment in the Resurrection, the Ascension, and the Descent of the Holy Spirit. This, again, is improbable. These events occurred only half a year after this prediction, and they would hardly have been referred to in words which apparently implied the death of most of his hearers, and the survival of only a few. Others, again, turn to the destruction of Jerusalem and the overthrow of Judaism as the "coming of the Son of Man," which some of the disciples would behold. Hence the "coming" would be spiritual in character. In our view, both verses of the passage refer to the same event; the first states the fact of the event and its results; the second, the time of the event. One thing is also assured from the standpoint of exegesis: the statements do not refer to a final coming at the end of the world, unless Jesus was mistaken as to the time of this, and study of the Gospels invalidates this suggestion. For our part, we are inclined to identify the "coming" with the fall of Jerusalem and the overthrow of Judaism as an organized agency. To appreciate the point of view, let us summon the context to our aid.

The words in question conclude the interview of Jesus with the apostles after the remarkable confession of Peter that Jesus was the Christ, or Messiah. As soon as this conviction was uttered, Jesus predicted his own sufferings, death, and resurrection, in accordance with the Isaianic idea of a suffering Messiah. This, however, was appalling to Peter, who was still haunted by a vision of a temporal Kingdom and a majestic King. He objected strenuously (Matt. 16:22). Jesus, however, recognized at once the thought underlying the protest of Peter as that of an invincible Messiah—the apostle of force—which he had rejected in the Temptation. He rebuked Peter (vs. 23) and further reinforced his position with the declaration that if any man would come after him, *he must renounce self*, take up his cross, and follow him as a suffering servant of God (vs. 24); that only in doing so could man find his true life; that whoever sought, in accordance with the view of Peter, to save his life was certain to lose it, and that nothing could possibly outweigh the interests of the soul, or the higher life (vss. 25-26). This thought was a revelation to the apostles and undoubtedly violated their prejudices and impaired their confidence. Many, indeed, would be ashamed of such a Messiah—“ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation”; yet (and here we have the *raison d'être* of the saying under consideration) this same Messiah, despite humiliation and death, would come in the glory of his Father with the Holy Angels, and would then be ashamed of those who had been ashamed of him. This, indeed, would occur before the

death of all who were then present. Thus the passage is an offset to the unbelief and the despair engendered by Jesus' prediction of his death and an emphatic reason why they should permit nothing to outweigh the interests of the soul. Compliance with this warning undoubtedly meant, in the first instance, immunity from the sad fate soon to overtake Jerusalem and the Jews, who had so markedly sacrificed their soul interests upon the altar of materialistic hopes and ambitions in their rejection of Jesus. We know, in fact, that the Christians about Jerusalem, when they saw the Roman armies encircling the city, fled to the little mountain town of Pella and thus escaped the carnage of Jerusalem's destruction. This was done because of Jesus' warning (Matthew, chap. 24; Mark, chap. 13; Luke, chap. 21); but manifestly those who had been ashamed of Jesus and unbelieving, would not accept the warning and would perish, as they did. The principle enunciated, however, is of course applicable also to that consummation which awaits the Kingdom at the end of the world.

Cometh Not by Observation

The third passage for consideration is the outgrowth of an answer given by Jesus to a question of the Pharisees who were concerned as to when “the Kingdom of God should come.” Jesus replied: “The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation; neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for behold, the Kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:20-21). His thought was that the Kingdom would come in a way not observable to the human eye. The

word "observation," indeed, corresponds to the Greek word as signifying "a singularly anxious watching." The Pharisees probably having departed, Jesus gives the disciples some further information on the subject suggested by the Pharisees' question.

And he said unto the disciples:

The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it. And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after them, nor follow them. For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day. But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation. And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day that the Son of man is revealed. In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife. Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it. I tell you in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left (Luke 17:22-36).

Unable to understand their Master, the disciples ask, "Where, Lord, shall this be?" He had spoken of his coming before, but never in such detail. Jesus replies, "Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together." The most satisfactory interpretation of these words is that of Meyer and Godet, substantially: "the carcass is humanity entirely secular and destitute of the life of God; the eagles (vultures) represent punishment alighting on such a society."

The question now arises as to the character of the "coming" referred to. Is it teleological or eschatological? Or is it temporal and mundane? The "coming" is usually interpreted as being at the end of the world. The opening words of the passage, however, refer to a *spiritual* Kingdom and a spiritual *coming*, "not with observation," and there is no indication that this view is departed from throughout the discourse. This at once precludes all reference to a glorious coming "*with* observation" amidst pomp and pageantry. Again, this "coming" is apparently closely connected with the sufferings of Jesus and his rejection by the nation; these seem to be the precursors of the "coming." While there is no explicit reference in the passage to connect this "coming" of the Son of Man with the "coming" after the destruction of Jerusalem, yet the marked similarity here in the thought and imagery to that subsequently used by Matthew, Mark, and Luke in describing the conditions preceding and following the advent of the Christ after the fall of the Holy City creates a strong presumption at least in favor of that event. This presumption

is strengthened, too, when we recall Jesus' reply to Peter after the frank confession of his messiahship. There Jesus also associates his sufferings, rejection, and death with the coming of the Son of Man, which some of those then standing by should witness ere their death. The only objection to this interpretation, in fact, may lie in what is said about one being taken and another left while at work or asleep. This, however, is only a pictorial way of saying that those who have been most closely related will "in the twinkling of an eye be parted forever." The language indicates the sharp line of demarcation which religion draws between men in all great crises of the world's history. Such a crisis there was, and such a distinction was drawn by the destruction of Jerusalem and the collapse of Judaism. Indeed, Christ well knew that he would cause such a separation among men, sending not peace but a sword on earth, and irrevocably sundering households (Matt. 10:34-39).

Mark 13:24-37

We now come to the chief passages which deal with this subject: Matt. 24:29-51; Mark 13:24-37; and Luke 21:25-36. Because of the lack of space and their very familiarity they are not quoted. Directing the attention of Jesus to the stately structures in Jeru-

salem, the disciples are perplexed by the words which their act calls forth. "Jesus said unto them, See ye not all those things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." Jesus' meaning, however, is apparent. Jerusalem had stood for centuries as the center of God's old dispensation, or covenant, with man. But now that the fulness of time had come, the old age must give place to the new—the messianic age of greater blessings and greater responsibilities. The intention and the hope had been to ground the new absolutely upon the old; the two were to make a harmonious whole. But in accordance with that ever-present tendency in religion to a damning ultra-conservatism, the old had refused to adjust itself to the new. What then must be done? Only one thing could be done: the old must be swept away. By every law of God and of Nature, the fittest must survive. Jerusalem and Judaism must give place to Universalism and Christianity. The conflict would be terrible, the suffering intense, the ruin dire, but the necessity was great. But the disciples do not understand. They say, "Tell us when shall these things be?" (Matt. 24:3), and there follows the famous discourse of the Mount of Olives.¹

¹ A brief analysis of Jesus' reply as given by Matthew gives the following result: From verses 4 to 13, the Master warns the disciples against false signs of the impending catastrophe—false Messiahs, wars and rumors of wars, famine and earthquakes. These, however, are only the beginning of travail (vs. 8). Persecution and hatred would ensue with the rising into prominence of false Messiahs and prophets, increase in wickedness, and a general apostasy. The apostles are not to be deceived by these, however, for before the predicted disaster the gospel of the Kingdom must be preached throughout the whole world. Then follows an indication of the true signs presaging the end. When the "abomination of desolation" referred to by the prophet Daniel is seen in the Holy Place, those who are in Judea are to flee into the mountains in extreme haste. But alas! for those who are pregnant, or have young children; and terrible indeed will it be if they are compelled to flee in winter or on the Sabbath, for this appearance of the dreaded symbol is but the prelude to tribu-

It is commonly agreed that the first portion of the several accounts of this discourse has reference to the signs and the stress preceding and ensuing upon the destruction of Jerusalem. This is made evident by Luke. "And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the destruction thereof is nigh. . . . And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: And Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (21:20-24). When we come to the verses descriptive of the coming of the Son of Man, we find, however, great diversity of opinion.

Roughly speaking, these opinions may be classified as those which are based upon the passages as they stand, and those which in some way would alter, or amend, the text.¹ Accepting the passage, however, as substantially representative of Jesus' thought, and interpreting words according to their natural signification, one thing is evident: there was to be no measurable interval between the destruction of Jerusalem and the coming of the Son of Man. According to both Matthew and Mark the coming of the Son of Man and the attendant phenomena are "*immediately*," or, "*in those days after that tribulation*," i.e., the fall of Jerusalem.

lation unexperienced in the past and to be unequaled in the future (vss. 15-23). Then we have another somber warning against deception by false signs, and an indication that when the true sign does appear it will be known at once and to all, because it is comparable alone to the omnipresent lightning flash (vss. 23-28). With verse 29 begins the description of the coming of the Son of Man. There will be celestial disturbances; all nations will mourn; the Son of Man will come on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory; the angels will be sent forth, and the elect gathered (vss. 29-32). This "coming" of the Son of Man is also described as occurring "*immediately after the tribulation of those days*." The disciples are further exhorted to know the signs of the end by the appearance of these phenomena, just as they expect the appearance of summer when the branch of the fig tree "is tender and putteth forth leaves" (vss. 32-33). The whole narration is also impressed indelibly upon their minds by the words: "Verily, I say unto you, *This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled*" (vs. 34). The exact day and hour of this visitation, however, neither the angels nor the Son know, but the Father only (vs. 36). Then follows a description of the world's incredulity, sensuality, and indifference to this "coming," with an earnest exhortation to the apostles to *watchfulness*. This is the subject-matter of vss. 42-51, and the key to the two parables which follow in chapter 25, verses 1-31. The parable of the Ten Virgins pleads for watchfulness and preparedness; the parable of the Talents pleads for preparedness through usefulness and service.

¹ There are five principal interpretations, which, with either modification or combination, represent almost all the views entertained upon the subject. Each of these has the support of weighty names. Briefly they are as follows:

(1) The passage records a prophecy of Jesus referring distinctly to his coming in his own generation, which was never fulfilled. This is the view of Strauss, Renan, Keim, Weizacker, etc. (2) While the disciples asked a question which connected two events which Jesus knew were not closely related in time, he answered both questions in his reply as though their idea was correct, and thus accommodated himself to their ignorance (the usual interpretation). (3) Jesus referred in the first part of his reply to the fall of Jerusalem, and in the second part to a spiritual "coming of the Son of Man" attendant upon it (Russell, Gould, etc.). (4) The account does not represent throughout the utterance of Jesus, but comprises original words of the Master, combined with a Jewish (Weizacker, B. Weiss) or Jewish-Christian Apocalypse (Keim, Wendt, Weiffenbach). (5) The account represents utterances of Jesus spoken on different occasions, which here constitute a composite narrative (Baur, Holtzmann, Stevens, Horton).

While Luke apparently separates them by a period of time, in reality he does not do so, but closes his report with a declaration similar to that of Matthew and Mark, prophesying the fulfilment of *all these events* within a lifetime. This renders it impossible to separate a united and harmonious account into two parts relating respectively to the near destruction of Jerusalem and to the remote and final coming of Jesus, and the end of the world. "*All these things*" are to happen within that generation: the obscuration of sun and moon and the coming of the Son of Man, as well as the fall of the Holy City.¹

An apparently insurmountable obstacle confronts us, however, in attempting to reconcile the prophecy of the coming of the Son of Man, as here described, with any fulfilment characterizing, yet subsequent to, the fall of Jerusalem. It is generally admitted, however, that the prophecy of the spread of the gospel throughout the known world found its fulfilment before the disaster to Jerusalem. Hence no difficulty is experienced here. When we come, however, to what is said about wars and rumors of wars, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes which precede, and signs in sun and moon and the heavens generally, with the Son of Man coming in the clouds and the angels gathering the elect, which follow the event, we are inclined to think that language so explicit and so coincident with our ideas upon the subject must refer to the end of all things.

Let us examine the language, however. Is it unprecedented and unique? Not

at all! It is but the usual apocalyptic and prophetic imagery, and it is to be construed metaphorically and figuratively. The apocalyptic literature and the Old Testament furnish a similar use of language in similar passages. Reference to wars and rumors of wars preceding the advent of the Kingdom was a current feature of Jewish Apocalyptic (Bk. Jub. 23:13; Apoc. Bar. 27:2-5; 48:32, 34, 37; 70:2, 3, 6, 7; IV Ezra 5:9; 6:24). Earthquakes and famines were also to be terrorizing signs of the end (Apoc. Bar. 27:6-7; 70:8; IV Ezra 9:3; 6:22). The Book of Isaiah, in describing the destruction of Babylon by the Medes, speaks as follows: "For the stars of heaven, and the constellations thereof, shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine" (Isa. 3:10). Again in Isa. 34:4, we read of a coming judgment upon Edom: "And all the hosts of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll; and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig-tree." (Amos 8:9; Joel 2:20-31; 3:15-16; Ezek. 32:7-8 and Asmp. M. 10:5 may also be consulted.) Now all of these passages refer to social, political, and religious disturbances among nations and men, attendant and consequent upon God's interference in human affairs. They are not descriptive of celestial disturbances but of terrestrial ones under the figure of celestial imagery. They do not portend either the destruction of sun or

¹ To interpret "this generation" (vs. 34) of "the Christian Church" (Origen and Chrysostom), or "the human race" (Jerome), or "the Jewish Race" (Alford) is out of the question. The word should bear its obvious meaning as in Matt. 23:36: "*the present generation.*"

moon, or "eclipses, or earthquakes, or meteoric showers," as some would have us believe. The use of such language, indeed, is necessitated by the very vehemence of the prophet's idea and his ardent desire to impress it upon a phlegmatic people. It is as though the prophet was wrestling with a mighty conviction which, in its struggle for emphatic expression, leaps from earth to heaven and borrows thence phraseology, intense and adequate. This interpretation at once removes all difficulty in applying the language used by our Lord to events immediately subsequent to the destruction of Jerusalem, provided these events warrant such a prediction. If, however, it is contended that our Lord's language is more intense than that of the ancient prophets, such intensity is to be expected. They, with vehement earnestness, predicted some disaster marking an *event in their national history*; he, with tragic solicitude, prophesied an event which marked *the end* of their history as a nation, and their rejection as the people of God.

Yet it may be urged that there is the plain statement about the coming of the Son of Man on the clouds of heaven, and the gathering of the elect by his angels. Is this also mere oriental imagery? There is certainly no greater reason for believing this language literal than there was in the other case. For confirmation of this view, let us turn again to the Old Testament, and consult Ps. 97:1-5, which gives an idea of God's government of the earth in language somewhat akin to this, and Isa. 19:1,

Zech. 9:14, and Ps. 18:5-16. Chiefly, however, should our attention be turned to Dan. 7:13 ff., from which the passage under consideration is probably derived. There the language is not to be taken literally. Daniel prophesies a kingdom unlike its predecessors, human, not brutish and bestial in character; on the earth, yet from heaven, and which is ushered in by one like a Son of Man.¹ Jesus simply means to say in the figurative language of this passage that the Kingdom foretold by Daniel would come in signal manner with the fall of Jerusalem. But again the question arises: How was this accomplished, and what events fulfil "the coming of the Son of Man with great power and glory"?

The answer is as follows: Christ is described in the New Testament as sitting on the right hand of God. This means that he occupies the eminent position of honor and authority, holding the government of the world in his hand. "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" are the words of Jesus just before the Ascension (Matt. 28:18). Hence, this "coming of the Son of Man" is the spiritual coming of the Kingdom of God (as Luke shows by identifying the two), not a final and visible coming of Jesus at the end of the world. The Son of Man would come to the nations of the earth, just as God is described as coming to the several nations referred to in the passages just quoted from the prophets. Christ and the Kingdom were to come after the fall of Jerusalem in that Jesus, then at God's right hand, would assume more and more the active

¹ The very use by our Lord of such expressions as "Son of Man" and "Kingdom of God" and their derivation from Daniel indicates an earthly and a present sovereignty of God, and precludes any exclusively eschatological interpretation.

government of human affairs. Thus we see the primary idea of the Parousia, which emphasizes not so much the *coming*, as the *continuous and abiding presence of the Son of Man*.

When the words translated, "the end of the world," are correctly translated, as in the Revised Version, "the end of the age," they throw a flood of light upon our Lord's meaning. The old age had been a preparation for the Messiah: the new age would be that in which the Messiah would be the chief factor and power. This would be brought about by spiritual forces—an idea elementary and fundamental in Jesus' conception of the coming of the Kingdom. The world was to be shaken out of its rut. Spiritual forces were to bring about a convulsion of society and pave the way for the new age. This is ever the method of Christianity; there is nothing less revolutionary in its methods; nothing more revolutionary in its ideas and results. Christianity will indeed turn the world upside down until it turns it right side up. Finalities are thus possible to the Kingdom of God. The Son of Man does not visibly appear, but his unseen personality, his ideas, his power, come into the world and cause his purpose to be worked out both in the individual and in society.

The language as to angels is figurative also and represents the divine messengers or "invisible heavenly agencies in an earthly event." With the destruction of Jerusalem and the fall of Judaism, the divine messengers, or agencies, would bring in the universality of the Kingdom of God, which was then threatened by the aggressive legalism and formalism of Judaism, to which the Acts of the

Apostles and the Apostolic Epistles bear such eloquent witness. The collapse of Jerusalem must mean the gathering of the elect of God from the four quarters of the globe. It would be the death note of nationalism and Judaism, but the birth cry of universalism and Christianity. The collapse was coming. The temper of the people made this perfectly apparent to the enlightened vision of Jesus; but as to the day and the hour, there were no data to determine them. His own generation, however, would witness these events.

Our interpretation of these passages, however, receives convincing support from Jesus himself. In the supremest moment of his life, he indicated decisively how the "coming of the Son of Man" is to be understood. With Jesus a prisoner before the high priest on the morning of his arrest, the old age stood face to face with the new. The odds were apparently against Jesus. In commanding tones the high priest put Jesus upon his oath, saying: "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God" (Matt. 26:63). The reply is as direct and explicit as the question. "Thou hast said: Nevertheless I say unto you, *Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven*" (vs. 64). Mark 14:62 gives Jesus' reply as follows: "I am: and ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Luke has it: "Hereafter shall the Son of Man sit on the right hand of the power of God" (22:69).

While these passages might be interpreted as a final coming of the Son of

Man, when they are correctly translated this is found to be impossible.¹ Mark says simply "ye shall see." Matthew adds the word "hereafter," but the Greek term is much stronger than this. It is ἀπ' ἀπρὶ, which means "*fromt his very time onward.*" Luke uses ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν, which signifies "*from now onward.*" Hence, the true rendering is: "*From this very moment onward, ye shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.*" The sense of contrast is great. Apparently powerless before the high priest, and compelled to testify as to whether he was the Messiah or not, Jesus replied that he was, and "what is more" (such is the significance of the word translated "nevertheless") that they, the high priest, and the leaders of the nation, despite the violent negation which environment gave to his claim, would witness his exaltation, beginning in the hour of apparent defeat and continuing thenceforth.

Jesus thus identifies himself with the Son of Man foretold by Daniel, and declares that his hearers will experience the beginning and the gradual establishment of the heavenly Kingdom. "*Coming on the clouds of heaven*" denotes here what it denotes in Daniel's vision—the origin and source of the Kingdom. "*Sitting at the right hand of power*" denotes occupation of the seat of honor and authority, whence Jesus would intervene in the affairs of men, being henceforth the determining factor in the world's history. The reference of the passage is clearly to a spiritual and a progressive "*coming of the Son of Man.*" From Jesus' departure from the world, there was to be a

continuous "coming of the Son of Man," sometimes closely connected with great crises in human affairs, as in the fall of Jerusalem, but more often "without observation." Human history would then enter upon a new age in which the kingdoms of this world would gradually become the Kingdom of God.

Jesus' doctrine of the Parousia is thus to Christianity what the doctrine of divine immanence is to philosophy and religion. Christianity, like Judaism, has suffered greatly from the doctrine of the divine transcendence. This made Judaism formal, legal, external, lifeless, and it has made Christianity unpalatable to thoughtful men. Nothing, however, is better substantiated in the words of Jesus, in the facts of experience and of history, than that Jesus is immanent in the affairs of men: and not only as an Idea, but as an unseen but active spiritual Power.

In the Gospel of John

Let us now turn to the teaching of the Fourth Gospel. At once we note a marked contrast. John has recorded none of our Lord's sayings about the fall of Jerusalem, which are so conspicuous in the Synoptic Gospels. Apocalyptic language and figure are absent also. We hear nothing, for instance, of the Son of Man coming on the clouds of Heaven, heralded by startling terrestrial and celestial phenomena. We find an entirely different mode of expression, and we are compelled to ask: Are we within a different circle of ideas also? This can be determined only by a careful consideration of the passages which deal with our subject. A difficulty arises,

¹ The reading of the Revised Version is here much superior to that of the Authorized Version.

however, from the apostle's peculiar interweaving of spiritual and physical conceptions.

In John 14:3 we read: "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself." Jesus really said, however, "I come," "I am coming," i.e., "I am ever coming," not "I will come."¹ This materially changes the aspect of the passage. There is no reference to a specific future coming, but to a continuous and spiritual coming. This may be, of course, in the resurrection, or the descent of the Holy Spirit, or to the individual either at conversion, continuously, or at death. Bishop Westcott says: "Christ is in fact from the moment of His Resurrection ever coming to the world, and to the Church, and to men as the Risen Lord. The thought is expressed by the use of the present 'I come,' as distinguished from the future, 'I will come' as of one isolated future act."

John 14:18 also refers to a spiritual coming of Jesus. Apparently leaving his disciples desolate, Jesus declared: "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you." Here again the words really are: "*I come to you*," not "I will come to you," and the context shows in what this "coming" consists. It is the coming of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, which the situation also demands. The promise of a distant advent would have given the apostles but cold comfort in their present plight, while the few fleeting appearances after the Resurrection would not have effectually relieved their necessity. Only the abiding presence of the Holy Ghost could meet the exigency.

¹ This is shown by Bishop Westcott and Dr. Reynolds in their commentaries on the Fourth Gospel.

In verse 23, a spiritual coming is also indicated, and it is conditioned by the obedience rendered to Jesus' words: "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." Verse 28 of the same chapter should receive a similar interpretation, especially when considered in connection with verse 7 of chapter 16, as it ought to be. "I go away, and come again unto you" (vs. 28). "It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you" (16:7). In John, chapter 16, there is the occasional use of the expression "ye shall see me," as in verse 16; and in verse 22 is found the clause "I will see you again." All of these passages are from Our Lord's last interview with the apostles; the words are spoken in the bonds of closest sympathy and under the shadow of Calvary. The Master says: "A little while and ye shall see me, and again a little while and ye shall not see me because I go to the Father." And again, "And ye therefore now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." We might be inclined to think of the Resurrection, and the subsequent appearances to the apostles as the fulfilment of these words, but surely something more is implied. The best commentators, Meyer and Godet, for stance, interpret these passages of a spiritual coming as a spiritual vision and perception of Jesus in his true significance; a spiritual visitation of his disciples to enlighten their minds, strengthen their wills, and inspire their lives, until

their vision recedes into eternity and they shall see him face to face. The thought is not of visual sight, but of spiritual insight.

A very interesting passage now awaits us. Jesus predicts that the Prince of the apostles shall die a martyr's death. Peter "turning about seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved, following: which also leaned on his breast at supper. Peter saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry *till I come*, what is that to thee?" Our question is: What is the "coming" referred to here? The final coming of Jesus is evidently the obvious meaning. The early interpretation is forthcoming in the verse which follows. "There went this saying abroad among the brethren that that disciple should not die; yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die, but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" (John 21:15-23).¹ An idea, however, set forth by Bishop Westcott is again of value, namely, that "*until I come*" often refers not to any *one* event but that continuous realization of Jesus' return which is the lofty privilege of faith, "until," pointing not so much to the ultimate consummation as to the interval between the commencement and the consummation of the coming. Hence the reading here would be: "If I will that he tarry *'while I am ever coming to him'* what is that to thee?"

Thus a study of these passages convinces that the Parousia meant to John

a spiritual and progressive coming. Even those who find scant reference to such a coming in the Synoptic Gospels readily admit that we have in the Fourth Gospel the idea of a spiritual coming. Professor Stevens says: "The spiritual conception of Christ's coming stands out in much clearer relief in our discourses, and is entitled to be considered the characteristic idea of the Fourth Gospel on the subject."² Many, however, find an inexplicable difference between the "coming" prophesied in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and the coming foretold in John—a difference not only in phraseology, but in idea. Some contend, in consequence, that the advent of Jesus in glory, in accordance with the synoptic accounts, was fully expected within the lifetime of the living generation, but that such a coming being unfulfilled when the Fourth Gospel was written, the Johannine account is the fading shadow of the former expectation. Others claim that John presents the true eschatology of Jesus, which, because of its depth and originality, the disciples were able only gradually to apprehend.

There is, however, no difference in idea between the Synoptics and the Fourth Gospel, while there is a marked difference in phraseology. Neither denies the final coming of Jesus to consummate the Kingdom of God, but both are concerned with his coming to establish the Kingdom on earth. That they would describe the Parousia differently is to be expected. The Synoptic Gospels

¹ The view of Meyer, Weiss, and Holtzman is that the final coming is referred to, and it is far more defensible than the view which finds here a prediction that John would live on until Jesus came to him in a natural death (Ewald, Olhausen, etc.). Luthardt's suggestion is that we have no prophecy of physical immortality in the passage; it is simply John's way of asserting that the Lord has come in the destruction of Jerusalem A.D. 70, the overthrow of the theocracy, and the establishment of the true Kingdom in all the world. This was "the coming" of which Jesus had spoken.

² This is the view also of Neander, Godet, and many others.

are busied with telling what Jesus said; the Fourth Gospel is equally busied with showing what Jesus meant. That the idea of the Parousia is less prominent in the Johannine Gospel and Epistles than in the other New Testament writings, says Bishop Westcott, is "because they belong to the period after the first great coming of Christ at the overthrow of the theocracy by the destruction of Jerusalem." We would not, indeed, expect John to use the figures of speech employed by the Synoptics in describing an event already past, and especially when he was more concerned with disclosing the character of the coming than with describing it symbolically.

The Johannine conception of the Second Coming is, in fact, an admirable commentary upon Jesus' saying to the high priest, which, we found, was the key unlocking the synoptic passages. The "coming" throughout the Gospel is a spiritual coming. One difference, however, is noted. In the Fourth Gospel the coming of Jesus is of a subjective character in that it relates to the individual, while in the Synoptic Gospels it is objective, relating to the world at large. This may have resulted from

John's peculiar personality, for his Gospel represents primarily a personal appropriation of Christianity, or, from the occasion upon which John records Jesus as referring to his Second Coming—the eve of the Crucifixion—which would in itself prompt to a subjective rather than an objective application by Jesus.

This interpretation of the Parousia also sheds much light upon the noted judgment scene of Matt. 25:31-46, revealing it not as a description of the final judgment of mankind, or a judgment of professing Christians, or of the pagan Gentiles, or a pictorial exaltation of Christ's approval of small deeds of service, as has been contended, but as an integral part of Jesus' great discourse on the Mount of Olives, continuing his thought and indicating the principle employed in selecting those who are the elect of verse 31 of chapter 24, who will be gathered into the Kingdom, namely those whose hearts prompted to consistent acts of mercy. It also shows that Jesus was not the victim of Jewish apocalyptic as many of his countrymen were, but that he used it as a basis for the elucidation of higher truth, separating the kernel from the husk.